

In the past few weeks, the headlines from South Asia have been dominated by the news from India's neighbor Pakistan, where a military coup has deposed the nation's civilian prime minister. This was obviously an important and very disturbing development, one which has been condemned by me and many of my colleagues here in Congress. Unfortunately, there is often a tendency to lump India and Pakistan together, to see all developments in South Asia as a function of the conflicts between India and Pakistan.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, what we now see in South Asia are two nations moving in very different directions. While Pakistan is mired in military coups and economic collapse, India sticks to the path of democracy and economic reform. We must consider India, and take it seriously on its own terms, as the world's largest democracy, the second most populous nation, an important regional player in Asia in its own right, a huge and growing market for American trade and investment, a potential partner on security issues and the fight against terrorism, and as a country with the great potential for cooperation in such areas as environmental protection, energy efficiency, and infrastructure development.

Mr. Speaker, this week we have seen some indications that U.S. policy is beginning to accommodate some of the important distinctions between these two countries. Last year, after India and Pakistan conducted nuclear tests, a wide range of economic sanctions were imposed on both countries.

About a year ago, Congress and the President acted to waive these sanctions for 1 year. This week, under the renewed waiver authority, President Clinton has waived the economic sanctions on India, but kept most of the sanctions against Pakistan in response to the coup.

Under the President's determination, Pakistan would be ineligible for loans from the Export-Import Bank and unable to participate in the International Military Education and Training, IMET, program. It also means that the U.S.-backed Overseas Private Investment Corporation, OPIC, and the Trade Development Agency would not be able to operate in Pakistan.

A White House National Security Council spokesman stated that the different treatment of the two countries reflects the reality that things have changed for the worst in Pakistan, and that there can be no business as usual in Pakistan until an elected government is restored. I hope that our government will stick with that policy.

More important, Mr. Speaker, I would urge the administration not to use the prospect of reopening military assistance to Pakistan as an inducement to the military coup leaders. This is particularly timely in light of recent reports of serious border attacks against India by Pakistani troops in Kashmir.

Secretary of State Albright has called on the Pakistani side to with-

draw from the line of control in Kashmir. Given the evidence that the hardliners now in charge of Pakistan were in large part responsible for launching the aggression against India last spring, maintaining the ban on military assistance to Pakistan makes very good sense.

Following the recent nationwide elections in India, a new governing coalition led by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee of the BJP has been sworn in. While Mr. Vajpayee and his party were in power prior to last month's voting, the recent elections have given him a stronger majority, allowing for greater political stability.

The new government has wasted no time in demonstrating its commitment to move forward on a bold economic agenda. The government will review the existing foreign direct investment regime to bring in greater transparency, cut delays in project implementation, and create a policy to insure an investment inflow of at least 10 billion U.S. dollars.

In the energy and power sector, the central government will work closely with the State governments on privatization and regulatory overhauls. The government will work to dismantle the administrative price regime. Improvement and expansion of transportation and telecom infrastructure is another major priority.

In the energy sector in particular, the potential for U.S.-India cooperation is great. During his trip to India, Energy Secretary Bill Richardson and Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh signed a joint declaration on energy cooperation, which calls for cooperation in conventional energy projects, renewable energy, and clean coal technology. Secretary Richardson has also reported progress with his India counterparts in discussions on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I hope that we will see continued progress in these and other areas, and that the upcoming planned visit to South Asia by President Clinton will further advance the process of establishing a U.S.-India relationship based on shared goals, mutual respect, and appreciation for each other's vital interests.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DIAZ-BALART addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extension of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my special order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

FOLLOW THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, tonight I am asking the Speaker of the House and the leadership of the Republican Party to respect the will of the American people, respect the demands of the American people, respect the vote of this House of Representatives, and quickly appoint conferees on H.R. 2723, the Patients' Bill of Rights.

This country cannot wait any longer for the vital health protections included in its important legislation. We cannot afford to have only those opposed to those protections at the table negotiating. To do so would guarantee that these hard-fought protections would just be negotiated away.

It would be criminal not to include Members from the majority who listened to the pleas from their constituents. It would signal the intent of the leadership of this House to ignore the protections that we fought so hard to include in the bipartisan patient protection plan.

So I ask the Speaker, I ask the House leaders not to prejudice the conference from the beginning. The Patients' Bill of Rights included life-saving protections that must be embraced and not thrown out. The people have spoken, and we must listen.

They said they wanted their HMOs to be accountable for decisions that HMO bureaucrats forced, and we listened. They said they wanted an effective appeals process so that decisions could be challenged and lives saved, and this House listened.

They pointed to States like Texas that have had both strong appeals process and accountability. The result of these protections is that few plans and no employers have been sued. This House listened. We took note, and we took action.

The people said that they wanted to continue with their cancer doctors and obstetricians during the course of treatment or pregnancy, and this House listened. They said they wanted to be able to take their children to the closest emergency room when an emergency struck, and this House listened.

They said they wanted their doctors to be able to talk freely with them about their treatment and the medications they needed without feeling gagged by their health plan, and this House listened.

Mr. Speaker, this House of Representatives listened to the American people. Please do not turn a deaf ear to those pleas. This life and death issue is too important to play politics with.

I urge that a conference that includes supporters of Patients' Bill of Rights from the majority party be held. They listened, Mr. Speaker. Will you listen? I yield back so that the Speaker and the majority will listen to the American people.